

Hope for the Discouraged and Depressed, Part 13 - Romans 8:36-37 – June 10th, 2012

- Today's teaching will be part 13 of a series I've titled; "Hope for the Discouraged and Depressed."
- In these two verses we've just read, the Apostle is going to rise from the pages of our Bibles as an example for us, and an encouragement to us.
- By way of introduction, I need to warn you about a paradoxical principle that's woven into the fabric of the text that we have set before us today.

- Let me explain, most of us would readily agree with what the prophet Isaiah writes about God's ways not being our ways, higher than our ways.
- However, I'm not so sure we would be as quick to agree with God's ways being diametrically opposed to our ways in being the exact opposite.
- Let me say the same thing a different way, sometimes God's ways will be an oxymoron of sorts, such that they become a contradiction in terms.

- As I grow and mature in my relationship with Jesus Christ, I'm learning I must get comfortable with the idea that God deals in the paradoxical.
- If I want to live for Christ, I must die to self, the way up is the way down, if I want to know His strength, then it can only be found in my weakness.
- Such is the case with what we have here by virtue of what Paul says about being more than conquerors. Namely, that comes by way of a paradox.

1. We are as sheep to be slaughtered (Verse 36)

- v36 Paul, in quoting Psalms 44:22, says it's for your sake that we face death all day long because we're considered as sheep to be slaughtered.
- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is, it echoes not only the theme of this chapter but the entirety of Paul's ministry.
- By that I mean, the Apostle Paul was well acquainted with suffering in the present, such that, he faced death every day and all day, in the future.

- In order to better understand why it is that Paul would quote this Psalm, we need to sort of borrow from the previous verse and revisit Paul's list.
- In verse 35, Paul lists seven things believers face every day and all daylong; trouble hardship persecution famine nakedness danger and sword.
- This begs the question of why do we have to suffer on a daily basis? And, why are we likened unto and considered as sheep to be slaughtered?

- The simple answer is that sheep are vulnerable and gullible, in that we like sheep can be easily led astray in and through that which Paul listed.
- In other words, it's vis-à-vis trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger and sword, that Christians can be separated from God.
- The sooner we as believers come to grips with the reality that in this Christian life in this fallen world we'll face these kinds of things, the better.

William Newell - Here, then, is the description of God's saints: "killed perpetually," and "sheep for slaughter." ...Let the saints rouse quickly from these false dreams of "peace." The saints are sheep for slaughter! Name yourself among them, and cease contending for your "rights" in a world that has cast out Christ! Persecution is shaping itself up again throughout Christendom—yea, even in the United States. Intolerance unto death for any who will not bow to a totalitarian state is ready, as in the days of the Roman emperors (who demanded worship) to assert itself,—is asserting itself, throughout the world. This "totalitarian" movement is setting the stage for Antichrist more rapidly than you dream! Therefore get ready. Put up over your mirror the motto: "I am Christ's: a sheep for slaughter."

- So, maybe now you're asking yourself, how in the world, pray tell, is knowing all of this supposed to fill my heart with hope and encouragement?
- Well, I'm so very glad you asked, because that answer is found and that hope returns with what the Apostle Paul says next in verse thirty-seven.

2. We are more than conquerors (Verse 37)

- v37 Here, the Apostle Paul answers our question when he says that in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.
- Know this, and understanding this, nay, even living like this is how it is, when it is, and the way it is, that hope can fill my discouraged heart.
- I suppose this would be a good place to explain what it means to be "more than a conqueror." I think we know what it means to be a conqueror.

- The best way I ever heard this explained was that being a conqueror meant you would be victorious after you entered into and fought the battle.
- Conversely, to be more than a conqueror means that you already have the victory promised prior to your entering into and fighting in the battle.
- Suffice it to say being more than a conqueror changes the whole complexion of the promise in this passage because now, I have the assurance.

- This is where the paradox comes back into play. The way I'm more than a conqueror comes by way of facing death as a sheep to the slaughter.
- While I know this may be seen as a firm grasp of the obvious, "there's no such thing as being a conqueror unless there's something to conquer."
- Furthermore, there's no way we can be more than conquerors unless there's more to be more than conquerors of, i.e. our present sufferings.

- By way of an illustration, it's the wind that's diametrically opposed to the aircraft that enables it to fly and soar, and thus conquer the opposition.
- So too is this true with the bird who cannot spread its wings and fly unless it has the opposition of the wind to lift it up into the air so it can travel.
- Neither can sailors sail lest there be opposition of the wind. Calm seas don't produce skilled sailors, and if there's never rain you have a desert.

- At the beginning of the sermon I mentioned that this daily opposition echoed not only the theme of this chapter but the entirety of Paul's ministry.
- The reason I bring it up again here at the close of the sermon is because it's the secret to being more than a conqueror in the life of a believer.
- This is why I see the Apostle Paul as an example for us, and an encouragement to us. He lived in the paradox of opposition being opportunity.

1 Corinthians 16:7-9 NIV (7) I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. (8) But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, (9) because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

- Not only did Paul see opposition in Ephesus as open doors of opportunity, he knew that God would further the Gospel in spite of that opposition.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 NIV (1) You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. (2) We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.

John 12:24-25 NIV I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. (25) The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

At the Calvary Chapel Senior Pastor's Conference in California last week, Damian Kyle said something that really hit home for me, and I want to share it with you because I think it just seals the deal so to speak. "The calling to be a pastor is a long, slow public death before a congregation - we decrease so He may increase for others."